



EFFICIENCY AT ITS BEST

In 2003, Richard Helder decided to make 180 degree turn in his profession. Leaving behind a 20-year career in gaming during which he held management positions in casino's in Aruba, Peru and St. Maarten, Gigi (as he is known in Aruba) decided to follow his entrepreneurial spirit and started his own business.

"Fast Delivery Services N.V. was born in 2003 because of a need in reliable courier services on the island. Since Aruba's Status Aparte in 1986, the island has witnessed remarkable economic growth and the establishment of many businesses, foreign and domestic. Liberalization overseas, coupled with increased competition and investment in Aruba caused many companies to change their business models and re-think the way business was conducted. Efficiency in operations and costs became increasingly important and this is where FAST stepped in".

At inception, the company offered basic messenger services – picking-up correspondence from a business and deliv-

ring it to another location. This service was provided with or without proof-of-delivery. Because of the reliability with which the company provided its services, clients soon started asking for additional services. How reliable is the company? Simply stated, when the owner himself makes deliveries while driving a scooter, passenger car or truck, fellow employees are inspired and aim to offer the best service possible as well. **"Many people used to ask me why I was driving a scooter after being used to wearing a tie-and-jacket to work. My answer was always simple – when you are building a business, its important that you understand each step of the business. Furthermore, I started this business with very little investment and quite frankly, if I could**

save the company money by making deliveries myself, I had no problem doing it. In fact, I still do it today".

The second phase in the development of FAST was the growth in outsourcing of the work done by "bode's" in Aruba. For years, it was common practice for companies to have an in-house staff member who would perform the task of making deliveries of correspondence and small packages. Besides requiring a full time employee, this also means that the company would have to assume the expenses associated with payroll, purchase of a vehicle and maintenance thereof. In private sector's continuous drive to attain cost efficiency, it became apparent that making deliveries

was not their core business and thus FAST stepped in.

The year 2006 was a year of many changes. Starting with the move from its initial offices in De Lasallestraat to larger facilities in the former Licores Aruba building situated on L.G. Smith Boulevard. The next big change came with the signing of an agreement with AVIANCA for the service known as AVIANCA EXPRESS. This is a service through which private persons or businesses can send correspondence and packages from Aruba to Colombia. AVIANCA EXPRESS delivers this to the home or business in Colombia and Venezuela. Similar agreements are already in the working with airlines that fly into the United States, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and other key destinations. **"Aruba is a multi-cultural society and there is an obvious need to send packages and correspondence to various Latin American and Caribbean destination and FAST has outfitted its office to accept these deliveries and this is done from 8am to 8pm, from Monday through Friday and from 8am to Noon on Saturday".**

The expansion of the services offered by FAST continued in 2007 with the introduction of Fast Food Xpress and Fast Cargo Services. The former is a service through which consumers can order food from their favorite restaurant through FAST and have their order delivered to their home or office. **"We have published many activities magazines on hotels and restaurant".**

During the first quarter of 2007 FAST signed an agreement with ACC Cargo (Miami, Florida) to be their representatives and customs brokers on the island of Aruba. As part of this, Mr. Helder explains that FAST not only managed to retain the majority of ACC clients but has also brought new clients on-board. Speed, reliability and competitive pricing is what has made FAST a growing player in this competitive industry.

"In retrospect, and to the reader, the initiation of the FAST and its development over the past 4 years may seem easy. Believe me – it was not. As is the case with any small business, there were tough times and we are also striving to improve. With the commitment of our staff and the support we have received from our vendors and bankers, none of this would be possible. Special thanks goes to my wife Diana, who has put up with my absence during long hours. From the time when I was working two jobs and spending 18 hours a day at work through today – without her understanding and support, I would not be where I am today. Needless to say, without the su-



pport of our clients, we would not have been able to achieve what we have so far. To all of our clients, small and large – thank you – we are grateful for the trust you have placed in us and we will always strive to surpass the expectations you have".

Human resources, culture and mentality play a critical role in the development of any business and FAST is not an exception to this rule. Contemporary Aruba is facing the debate of foreign workers vs. domestic workers and regardless of what opinion you may have, it is a reality that almost all businesses operating in Aruba face every day. In this regard Gigi explains that **"it is important that Arubans leave behind the "culture of blame" – problems occur, mistakes are made. What is important is that we learn from the mistakes because in my opinion, a mistake remains a mistake when we fail to learn from it. Besides this, it is also important for the "laga pa mañan" attitude be removed – clients require service and our success has been because our team gives 100%. When we don't give 100% and when we don't have a sense of urgency is when the door is opened for competition, foreign and domestic. I am not against competition, on the contrary, but when it comes to excelling and keeping market share, it is critical to shed negative attitudes and focus on the task at hand. Hard work, clear vision".**

